

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-106. (canceled)

107. (currently amended) An isolated nucleic acid comprising:

two repeated nucleotide sequences 5 to 10 nucleotides long and spaced 17 to 23 nucleotides apart, wherein the downstream member of said repeated sequence is located 30 to 38 nucleotides upstream from a -10 region of a bacterial gene,

~~wherein transcription of a coding nucleic acid sequence operatively linked to said isolated nucleic acid is activated by an expression product of a SakR gene or functional analog thereof that has been activated by an expression product of a SakK gene or functional analog thereof,~~ wherein said repeated nucleotide sequences are selected from the group consisting of residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:6, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:7, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:8, residues 7-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:9, and residues 7-8, 10-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:10.

108. (canceled).

109. (currently amended) A vector comprising an inducible promoter ~~(I)~~ that comprises two repeated nucleotide spaced 17 to 23 nucleotides apart and selected from the group consisting of residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:6, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:7, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:8, residues 7-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:9, and residues 7-8, 10-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:10;

operatively linked to a multiple cloning site for inserting a polynucleotide of interest so that the inducible promoter ~~(I)~~ controls transcription of an inserted polynucleotide of interest.

110. (previously presented) The vector of claim 109, wherein the polynucleotide of interest encodes a polypeptide having proteolytic activity, carbohydrolytic activity or autolytic activity.

111. (previously presented) A gene expression system comprising the vector of claim 109 and further comprising a *Lactobacillus* host cell.

112-125. (canceled).

126. (new) A kit comprising:

(a) the vector of claim 109; and

(b) a peptide consisting of an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1 or residues 19-37 of SEQ ID NO: 3.

127. (new) The kit of claim 126 further comprising a *Lactobacillus* host cell.

128. (new) A vector comprising an inducible promoter that comprises two repeated nucleotides spaced 17 to 23 nucleotides apart and selected from the group consisting of residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:6, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:7, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:8, residues 7-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:9, and residues 7-8, 10-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:10;

operatively linked to a polynucleotide of interest that encodes an enzyme having proteolytic activity, carbohydrolytic activity or autolytic activity so that the inducible promoter controls transcription of the polynucleotide of interest.

129. (new) A vector comprising an inducible promoter that comprises two repeated nucleotide spaced 17 to 23 nucleotides apart and selected from the group consisting of residues 7-14

and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:6, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:7, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:8, residues 7-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:9, and residues 7-8, 10-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:10;

operatively linked to a restriction enzyme site for inserting a polynucleotide of interest so that the inducible promoter controls transcription of an inserted polynucleotide of interest.

130. (new) A kit comprising:

(a) the vector of claim 129; and

(b) a peptide consisting of an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1 or residues 19-37 of SEQ ID NO: 3.

131. (new) The kit of claim 130, further comprising a *Lactobacillus* host cell.

132. (new) A vector comprising an inducible promoter that comprises two repeated nucleotide spaced 17 to 23 nucleotides apart and selected from the group consisting of residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:6, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:7, residues 7-14 and 30-38 of SEQ ID NO:8, residues 7-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:9, and residues 7-8, 10-14 and 31-38 of SEQ ID NO:10;

operatively linked to a polynucleotide of interest obtained from a source other than a *Lactobacillus* cell, so that the inducible promoter controls transcription of an inserted polynucleotide of interest.

133. (new) A kit comprising:

(a) the vector of claim 132; and

(b) a peptide consisting of an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1 or residues 19-37 of SEQ ID NO: 3.

134. (new) The kit of claim 133, further comprising a *Lactobacillus* host cell.